MADROÑO, Vol. 46, No. 1, pp. 49–50, 1999

NASCENT INFLORESCENCES IN *ARCTOSTAPHYLOS PRINGLEI*: RESPONSE TO KEELEY

PHILIP V. WELLS
Department of Botany, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045

In an account of the absence of nascent inflorescences in *Arctostaphylos pringlei,* C. Parry Keeley (1997) pays lip service to the diversity of these developmental structures in the genus but illustrates only the expanded paniculate type of his own species, "*A. rainbowensis*". Unfortunately, he seems unaware that there is wide variation in stages of development of the nascent inflorescence in different species of *Arctostaphylos.* Whatever the failing may be, I cut to the point by illustrating the nascent inflorescence on one of my collections of *A. pringlei* (Fig. 1), dated November 6, 1986, from the San Bernardino Mountains, CA (typical of five or more on as many specimens).

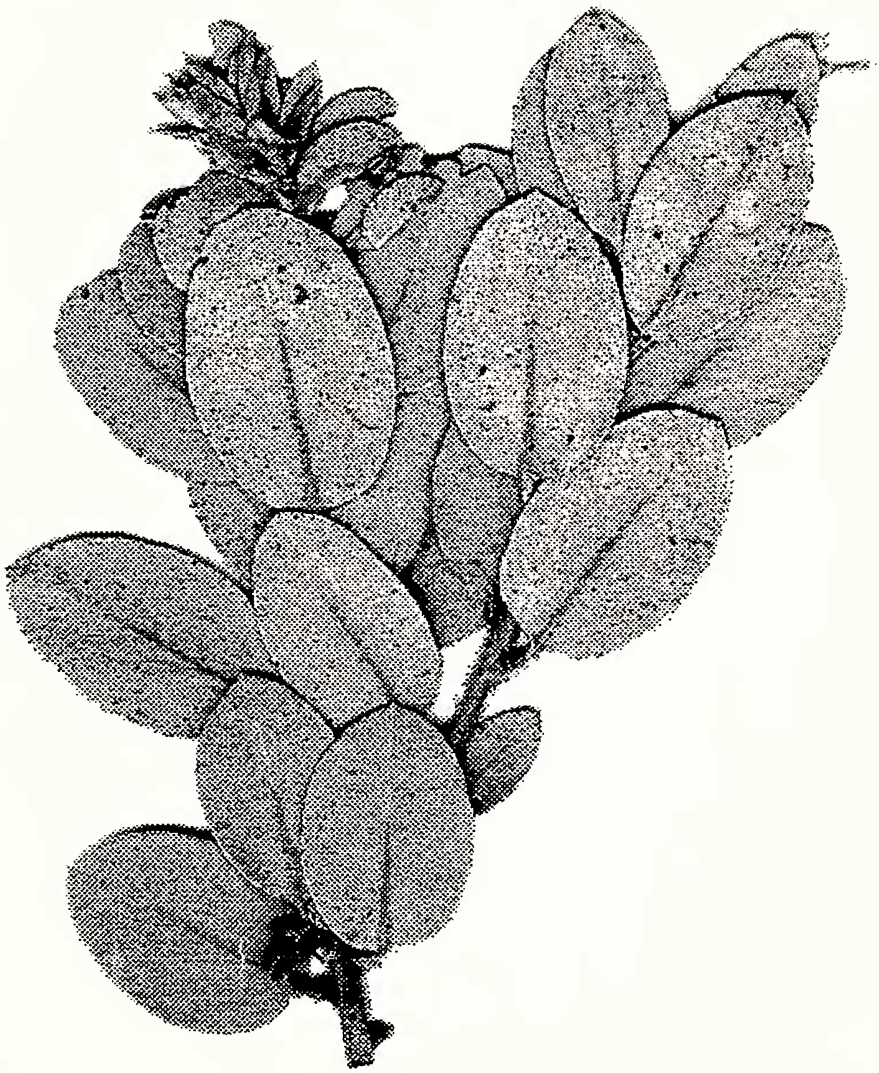

FIG. 1. Life-size scan of branchlet of *Arctostaphylos pringlei,* as it was collected on November 6, 1986. The bracteose nascent inflorescence is at the upper left, where it terminates a 1986 shoot of the year. Note the distal position above the mature leaves of the year.

All species of *Arctostaphylos* have the inflorescences terminal at the ends of branchlets. Terminal meristems shift from a vegetative mode producing leaves to a flowering mode producing a dormant, embryonic (nascent) inflorescence at the tip of the branchlet. The nascent inflorescence terminates growth on that axis; it forms as the new leaves mature below it on the same shoot. Both nascents and new leaves are produced on shoots of the current year, following completion of flowering on separate shoots of the preceding year. Thus, in Figure 1, the new (1986) shoots have fully mature leaves, but the bracteose, distal nascent inflorescence is immature and dormant on November 6, 1986; the separate shoots bearing ripe fruits (the 1985 shoots) were collected but are not shown.

The period of dormancy of the nascent inflorescence varies from 5–10 months; in most species this prevents flowering in the summer and fall, when the drought of the Mediterranean isoclime is most intense. Most of the coastal manzanitas bloom in the dead of winter, peaking in January. Among the later species is *A. glandulosa,* which often flowers in March (the tetraploid crown-sprouters are late-bloomers). Latest of all to bloom are the montane species, notably *A. pringlei,* which flowers in April and May. Since the formation of nascent inflorescences on the new shoots may be much later in *A. pringlei* than in most other species, they may well be overlooked.

Literature Cited

Keeley, J. E. 1997. Absence of nascent inflorescences in *Arctostaphylos pringlei.* Madroño 44:109–111.